

## **Renowned First Nation Author Visits SD #27**

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For two days beginning December 17th, Calvin Helin, First Nation author of the best selling book, *Dances with Dependency*, visited School District 27 schools in 100 Mile and Williams Lake speaking to secondary students at Peter Skene Ogden and Williams Lake Secondary School about the need to become educated citizens.

Mr. Helin's work explores the history of First Nation people in terms of a First Wave characterized by a culture of resiliency and self-reliance; a Second Wave of European contact characterized by the unraveling of the pre-European language and culture, and the establishment of a dominant European culture; a Third Wave characterized by the subsuming of First Nation culture and the beginning of an increasing dependency on federal government transfer payments for First Nation people; and the Fourth Wave which will be characterized by the growth of First Nation educational success, career development, a resurgence of the resilient and self-reliant First Nation culture and an increasing independence from the federal transfer payments. In short, this Fourth Wave is essential for the resurgence of First Nations culture and prosperity as well as for the cultural and economic health of Canada as a whole. The current state of affairs, Helin points out, will no longer be supportable for First Nation and non-First Nation alike given Canada's changing demographics.

The key to the resurgence of self-reliance rests with becoming educated according to Mr. Helin. As a lawyer by profession and one who had tried and failed at a number of other trades and skills, his message resonated with his audiences.

Mr. Helin notes that all cultures faced with similar circumstances of forced dependency encounter the same type of challenges currently faced by many First Nation communities. According to Mr. Helin, education not only affords increased economic opportunities, but it also allows people to make meaning of one's place in the greater scheme of things. Specifically for First Nation people, education provides the means by which they can "unlearn the learned helplessness" which often accompanies the culture of dependency.

Mr. Helin goes on to cite the example of the Maoris in New Zealand who having found themselves in similar circumstances to First Nation people in North America have embarked on a path to reclaiming their resiliency characterized by education, economic enterprise, and economic integration.

In Mr. Helin's analysis, at the end of the day, "There is no them and us - only us." The need to begin in earnest is upon us and in closing, Helin left his audiences with this saying, "Wai Wah!" which in Tshimsham means, "Just do it!"

Mr. Helin will be a guest on the Oprah Winfrey and Larry King television shows in the United States in 2008 to promote his book and spread his message to audiences there.